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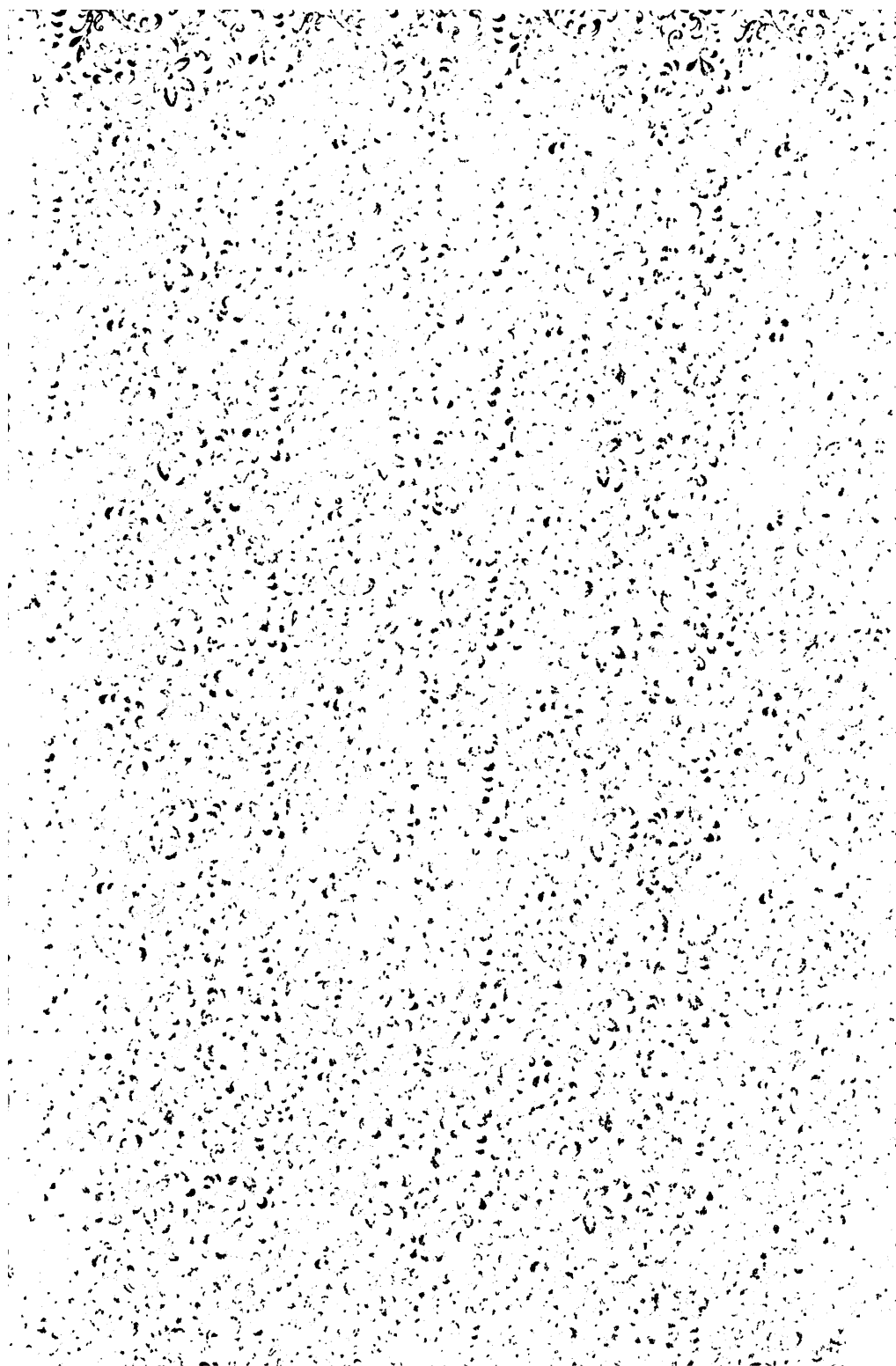
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1836





THE IMPORT
OF THE
G O S P E L M E S S A G E,
AND THE
RESULTS OF ITS FAITHFUL ANNOUNCEMENT,
ILLUSTRATED
IN A

S E R M O N ,
Delivered at the Ordination

OF THE
REV. CHARLES T. PRENTICE,
To the Pastoral care of the Congregational Church and Society, in Weston, North
Fairfield Parish, JUNE 8th, 1836.

BY CHARLES PRENTICE, A. M.
PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN SOUTH CANAAN, CONN.

HARTFORD.
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1836.

WESTON, June 8, 1836.

REV. CHARLES PRENTICE,

DEAR SIR:

In accordance with the unanimous vote of the North Fairfield Congregational Church and Society, and the particular wish of the Church, we, the undersigned, committee of arrangements, in their behalf, do tender you our thanks, for the very able and impressive sermon, delivered at the ordination of the Rev. Charles T. Prentice, this day; and under the full conviction, that your discourse is eminently calculated to advance the cause of the dear Redeemer, and the interests of the Church, we respectfully solicit a copy for publication.

We remain, Reverend and dear Sir,
very cordially, your most obedient servants,

ISAAC BENNET,
JESSE WAKEMAN,
JAMES BALDWIN,
ALFRED BURR,
JEREMIAH OAKLEY.

CANAAN, July 4, 1836.

TO MESSRS. ISAAC BENNET, JESSE WAKEMAN, JAMES BALDWIN,
ALFRED BURR, and JEREMIAH OAKLEY,

GENTLEMEN:

In conformity to your request, I hereby transmit you a copy of the discourse, which I delivered at the ordination of my son, for publication, with my fervent prayer to God, that its publication, may "advance the cause of the dear Redeemer, and the interests of the Church."

I am, Gentlemen, most respectfully and affectionately

Yours, in our common Lord,

CHARLES PRENTICE.

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1836

SERMON.

ACTS XX: 26, 27.

"WHEREFORE I TAKE YOU TO RECORD THIS DAY, THAT I AM PURE FROM THE BLOOD OF ALL MEN: FOR I HAVE NOT SHUNNED TO DECLARE UNTO YOU ALL THE COUNSEL OF GOD."

THESE words are part of an address delivered by St. Paul at his last interview with the elders of the church of Ephesus. The interview was at Miletus, whither the Apostle had summoned them to meet him; and it was attended with circumstances of the most tender and thrilling interest. He was assured, either by express revelation from heaven, or by what he deemed decisive providential indications of the fact, that the present would be his last opportunity of addressing the dear christian friends and fellow-laborers then before him, with whom he had spent, in most delightful intercourse and communion, some of the happiest days of his life. He reviewed, in concise, yet most impressive manner, the scenes through which he and they had passed together at Ephesus. He showed, particularly, with what assiduity he had labored, amid what trials, conflicts, and persecutions, and with what results. He was able to make an appeal which must have been responded to with cheerfulness and sincerity by every one present, that he had not labored in vain, nor spent his strength for naught; but had, so far as human instrumentality is concerned, secured the great ends of the Christian ministry. He had discharged with fidelity to his Lord and Master, and with affection and tenderness to his dying fellow men, the appropriate duties of his office—and although as-

sured that bonds and afflictions still awaited him, yet he affirmed—"None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself—so that I might finish my work with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." He felt that he could appeal with entire confidence to his hearers, yea, to the heart-searching God himself, that he was "pure from the blood of all men." And Oh how important, my brethren, that every one inducted into the sacred office, should so discharge the appropriate duties of the ministry, as to be able to adopt the triumphant language of the Apostle, at his parting interview with the elders of the church at Ephesus. What faithfulness in the discharge of duty, however self-denying; what purity of principle and conduct, and what ennobling motives, distinguished the great Apostle of the Gentiles! And such characteristics should be predicable of every one as he commences his ministerial labors, and should distinguish him throughout the whole course of his ministry—that he may be able to say, at its close, and when called to give an account of his stewardship—"I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." It will hence be natural in the prosecution of this subject, to consider the import of the gospel message, and the results of its faithful announcement.

And what I now propose to offer in elucidation of the subject, will be arranged under three topics of inquiry, viz: What is a minister of Christ bound to announce? Why is the announcement of such a message requisite on his part? And in what manner should it be done?

1. What is a minister of Christ bound to announce?

The Apostle affirms that he "had not shunned to declare all the counsel of God." By "the counsel of God," is no doubt meant the revelation of his will, and by *all* the counsel of God, his whole will, as in any way disclosed. The holy scriptures, then, of the old and new testament, comprise what the minister of Christ has it in charge to announce; for "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the

man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished, unto all good works."

The various details with which "the oracles of God" are fraught, are *all* to be regarded as important in their nature, relations, and ultimate bearings. The details alluded to are found in the historical, biographical, doctrinal, experimental and practical parts of the inspired records.

The bible was, no doubt, prepared with a view to universal extension for the use of all nations. How proper, then, that its history should carry us back to the commencement of time itself—that the history of the creation of the heavens and the earth should be recorded by an unerring hand—that the remembrance of it might be perpetuated, and not be lost among the fabulous narratives of the heathen; that a true account of man's apostacy from primeval innocence and rectitude might be furnished; that men might contrast their present circumstances with those in which their great progenitors were placed, and thereby become possessed of ample evidence of their need of redemption through the blood and righteousness of the Messiah. The sacred writer of the Pentateuch carries us back, at least, a thousand years beyond any authentic human records extant. And how interesting the fact, that we have access to records that can be depended on, and records which respect not only the creation of the universe and the great apostacy in paradise, but also the deluge and other events and revolutions throughout the patriarchal ages, as well as in the times of the prophets, judges, and kings of Israel and Judah, and through every intervening period down to the coming of the Messiah.

Who can read without interest the inspired accounts transmitted to us, of God's dealings with the church under the former dispensation, of its continuance, progress, and extension—of the deliverance of the chosen tribes from Egyptian servitude—of the delivery of the law amid such terrific scenes at Mount Sinai—of the overthrow of the devoted nations of Canaan, and of the settlement of the Israelites in the promised land. Who can do otherwise than exclaim with the Psalmist, "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men."

Again : how full of interest are the biographical sketches of individuals distinguished for piety and every amiable and lovely trait of character ; such, particularly, as those of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Moses, Samuel, Elijah, David, and a host of others, "of whom the world was not worthy." Sacred biography opens a storehouse of knowledge of pre-eminent utility, to such as love to examine the characteristics of the great and the good of past ages, who shone as lights in a dark world.

How vitally important is the subject of experimental piety as exhibited both in the old and new testaments. How clearly and forcibly inculcated is the necessity of spiritual renovation and divine illumination. The subject of special divine influence, in order to the removal of the sinful heart of man, holds a prominent place under every dispensation of the covenant of grace, so that according to explicit declarations of inspired penmen, no one of the race of Adam, either young or old, has ever entered, or will ever enter the kingdom of God without being "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." It is the language of the unerring Teacher, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again."

It is another important branch of ministerial duty, to impart *doctrinal* instruction.

St. Paul was able to testify in the utmost sincerity of his soul, that he had not shunned to declare *all* the counsel of God." The phraseology employed in this passage, seems intended to denote the evangelical views of this distinguished champion of the cross. This language, however, is substantially the same as is adopted by other inspired writers. The word "counsel" may be intended to designate the prominent characteristics of the scheme or system of doctrines which the Apostle exhibited, viz : such a system as would exalt the moral governor of the world, as would show on what his holy administration was based, as would manifest the stability of his government, as would demonstrate the fact, that all things would ultimately issue in the advancement of God's glory, and the highest felicity of his blessed kingdom. Now what scheme of religion, what system of doctrines has such bearings, and may be considered as leading

to such auspicious results? Certainly no scheme, the prominent characteristics of which, are different from those exhibited by the Apostle Paul. All who peruse his epistles must be aware that they abound in doctrinal discussion. He lays down certain principles as a foundation on which to erect the superstructure durable as the throne of heaven.

The being and unity of God, and the divinity of persons in the Godhead ~~are~~^{are} exhibited together with natural and moral perfections of this Triune Jehovah, and the various displays of his essential and incommunicable attributes in the works of creation, providence and redemption. And it accords with explicit representations of the inspired penman, that all those displays are made according to a settled plan, devised and established in the councils of eternity. The following passages are selected and subjoined, as a specimen, to show what are the obvious decisions of inspiration upon the point before us. Psalm xxxiii. 11: "The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations." Isaiah xli. 9, 10: "I am God and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Prov. xix. 21: "The counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." Ephesians i. 11: "Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Romans xi. 34—36: "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory forever: Amen."

The Apostle affirms in the text—"I have not shunned to declare unto you *all* the counsel of God," How clearly is the fact recognized in these passages that God ever acts from system, design or a settled plan. And how plainly is it a prime object with the inspired writers, to exhibit the character of God in this light, and to show that he is in deed at the head of creation, acting from motives originating in his own mind, "working all things after the counsel of his own will."

In the development of the divine plan, the various doctrines,

institutions and duties of revealed religion are stated as being constituent parts of a system devised by infinite wisdom and goodness, and in all respects worthy of the author and finisher of our faith. The plan of government adopted by Almighty God, will, in its operations, afford the most illustrious display of his own character, and bring into existence the highest possible felicity of his holy and blessed kingdom. We are led to this result from the following among other considerations.

The whole human race being utterly devoid of holiness, and totally depraved, must have eternally perished without an atonement, and such an atonement as was made by the Son of God, divinity and humanity being mysteriously united in the complex person of "the great God our Saviour." Such is the opposition and enmity of the natural heart to holiness, that none will ever be saved without the direct renewal of the heart by the Holy Spirit. All who are ever saved were given to Christ in the covenant of redemption; and the subjects of renovating mercy will, without a single exception, be "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." The present is man's only state of probation, and the awards of the great-day of retribution will be final. "These saith the judge, shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

Another part of the message to be announced embraces the practical duties of religion.

This should be clearly unfolded to the understandings of men, and pressed upon their hearts and consciences by the combined weight of all such motives as are sanctioned by the authority of the law, and the provisions and disclosures of the gospel. No part of the evangelical system that has been adverted to, sets aside, or is in any sense hostile to personal obligations and responsibility. The claims of heaven are in the highest sense obligatory upon men, and upon *all* men. God is as worthy of being loved and obeyed, as though no apostacy had occurred, and he treats as moral and accountable beings, such as *have* apostatized. In the claims he urges, and in the overtures he makes, there is nothing that bears the semblance of any thing to operate as an infringement upon the requisite powers of moral agency. The Most High displays and vindicates the preroga-

tives of a righteous moral governor, in his treatment of both the righteous and the wicked. The friends of Christ ~~are~~ exhorted to "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling;" as "it is God who worketh in them to will and to do of his good pleasure;" and to be "steadfast and unmoveable always abounding in the work of the Lord."

Sinners are required by the authority of Zion's King to exercise repentance towards God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, to flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold on eternal life; to strive to enter in at the straight gate, assured that many will seek to enter in and shall not be able. And such are uniformly represented in the word of God, as inexcusably criminal and guilty, while they heed the infatuated counsels of the carnal mind, and spend the precious season allotted them to prepare for life eternal, in "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Then what the minister of Christ is required to announce is, "all the counsel of God."

This leads to the

II. Second topic of inquiry proposed, which is to show why the announcement of such a message is requisite on his part. This may be seen to be requisite,

1. From the nature and extent of his commission. He derives all his authority and binding instructions from the King of Zion. When the ascending Redeemer commissioned his disciples to go into all the world, it was to preach the gospel to every creature. What was enjoined upon an ancient prophet, is now as explicitly enjoined upon every one set for the defence of the gospel. "Preach the preaching that I bid thee." "If any man speak," says an apostle, "let him speak as the oracles of God." "The prophet," saith Jeremiah, "that hath a dream let him tell a dream; he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully; what is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord." Such as are intrusted with the ministry of reconciliation are employed as ambassadors from the court of Heaven, to negotiate a treaty of peace and reconciliation, with revolted subjects in this province of Jehovah's empire. And they are thus to disclose their testimonials, and announce their message. "We then are am-

bassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we ~~pray you~~ in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."—2 Cor. v. 20. They may not transcend the limits of their commission, or the obvious import of their instructions, nor keep back any part, however offensive that part may be, to proud worms of the dust; nor have they any license to mingle philosophical theories and speculations with what is guarded and sanctioned by a "thus saith the Lord." Hence this language of caution uttered by an apostle, and couched in language most pointed and decisive in Col. ii. 8: "Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of man, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

2. There is an intimate connection, and a beautiful symmetry between the doctrines of Scripture, or the several parts of revealed truth.

This is strikingly obvious in respect to what are usually distinguished as the doctrines of the reformation, or the doctrines of grace. All of discriminating views must perceive, that they will stand or fall together. That doctrine which elevates Jehovah to the throne of the universe, shows the stability and perpetuity of his government, that events, whether in the natural, or moral, or political world, do not take place by chance, or at random; but that all ~~things~~, without the possibility of failure, or of a contrary result, be controlled and overruled to subserve purposes of the highest utility, under the divine administration.

But on the other hand, a denial of the doctrine of God's absolute supremacy will inevitably lead to the conclusion that God may yet be thwarted in his designs, however benevolent; yea, that he may be infinitely disappointed in the final issue of events. If there be no fixed plan or system on the part of the Deity, no mortal can form even a probable conjecture as to the ultimate issue of things under his moral and providential government. So dark and confused are many occurrences, so intricate and perplexing the tenor of many providential dispensations, that without an unqualified admission of the fact that the Most High "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will—that he is able to bring good out of evil, light out of darkness, and order out of confusion, to make the wrath of man praise him, and

to restrain the remainder of wrath," little or no ground can be seen to rejoice that "the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

The Scripture doctrine of election, though often assailed by the tongue of malice, and the pen of controversy, holds a prominent place in the system of revealed truth. It is rendered certain from the due consideration, and admission of this doctrine, that some from this guilty and polluted world will be saved; yea, that this will be the case with multitudes, which no man can number, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.

The apostle shows us in the following passages, with what emotions of praise and transport, he contemplated this doctrine, so obnoxious to some people. Ephesians i. 3-6: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, whereas he hath made us accepted in the beloved." But discard this doctrine—a doctrine so animating to the inspired apostle, and other enlightened followers of the Lamb, and who can prove that any one of the race of Adam now living, will ever enter into the world of blessedness. If God has not *purposed* the salvation of any, there are no data from which to draw the conclusion that any now in arms against heaven, will ever ground their weapons, "repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." But assuming the ground that this is a plainly revealed doctrine of Scripture, and abundant reason is found to rejoice in the fact, that Christ will yet, "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied;" that "his people shall be willing in the day of his power." And so may see why the apostle thus records his warm and cordial approval of the doctrine: 2 Thess. 2. 13—"But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth.

Intimately connected with this doctrine is that of the entire depravity of the natural heart—that of the sovereign and irresistible energy of the Holy Spirit in the ~~renewal~~ of the heart, and that of the final perseverance in holiness of all who are born into the kingdom. So certainly as one of these doctrines is true, and revealed by inspiration of God, so is another—so is each one—and so are the whole constituent parts of the system of the Bible truth. Hence we may award the praise of consistency, as it regards their own scheme, to those who deny the doctrine of election, and that of the perseverance of the Saints. It would be absurd to admit the latter, and deny the former, or to deny the latter, and admit the former. There is an inseparable connection between the doctrines adverted to—and a peculiar beauty and symmetry may be seen to pervade the whole.

In illustration of the same train of thought, it may be remarked farther, that the denial of the doctrine of native depravity will naturally lead to the conclusion, that no moral character, or qualities that constitute moral character, was predicable of moral beings, as they commence existence in this world; and hence, that there is little, if any use, in infant dedication to God in baptism. But admit what David, and Paul, and other inspired writers unequivocally affirm, that men are shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin; that they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies; that by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and that so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned; and the decisive declaration of our blessed Saviour, that “that which is born of the flesh is flesh,” while that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit;—and we can see the propriety of dedicating the infant seed of believers to God in baptism—and that such are as capable of being saved by the blood of Christ, or “by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost,” as adults.

In connection with this view of the subject, it may be in point to remark again, that a denial of the entire depravity of the natural heart leads (it is extensively known) to a denial of the necessity of divine influence to change the heart. And this great doctrine of special divine influence, the very hinge on which the door of salvation turns, is virtually set aside, by such

as are hostile to that part of the system of revealed truth now under consideration. But admit the doctrine of total depravity, of the utter alienation of the heart from God and holiness; that positive enmity against God has its seat in every unrenewed heart, as stated by Christ and his inspired apostles, and man cannot but be seen to be in a hopeless condition, without the direct interposition of sovereign grace in his favor. Now, the truths and doctrines adverted to, are of such moment in divine revelation, that they ought to be explained as clearly as possible, often inculcated, and frequently repeated. They are the doctrines of the reformation, effected through the instrumentality of Luther, Calvin, and others, raised up by Providence, as the exigencies of the church and the world required. They are recognized as fundamental articles in most of the Protestant confessions of faith, and they have been sealed by the dying testimony and blood of a host of martyrs.

3. The true character of God cannot be seen, and will not be loved, without a correct view of the system of revealed truth.

How glorious and lovely the character ascribed to Jehovah by inspired penmen! And this character, let it be remembered, is seen in its unrivalled moral beauties, only in connexion with the scheme or system of truth as revealed in the inspired volume. Explain away, or expunge any of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, and so far you tarnish the lustre of the divine attributes, and serve to eclipse the grandeur, splendor, and glory of the moral sun in the firmament. It was while contemplating the great doctrines of revelation, that the apostle was led to exclaim in amazement and rapture—"O the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unspeakable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." Thus the announcement of the message we have considered, is requisite on the part of a minister of Christ, in order to a proper exhibition of the true character of God.

4. He is warranted to anticipate the blessing of God, ~~in~~ his ministrations, only as he declares with fidelity *all* the counsel of God.

So high and solemn was the apostle's regard to the pure gospel of Christ, as revealed, that he says in Gal. i. 6-8: "I mar-

vel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel, which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would prevent the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say we again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

The blessed God may be expected to impart his blessing to the faithful exhibitions of his own word. "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater—so shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth—it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the whereto I sent it."

5. Unless all the counsel of God is announced, people will be likely to cherish the belief, that they are thrown upon their own unaided resources.

And why should any different result be anticipated by any, if the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel do not hold a prominent place in the instructions upon which they attend! Dr. Chalmers, whose fame is now trumpeted through both hemispheres, was, as it appears from his own voluntary confessions, at the commencement of his own ministerial labors, ignorant of the first principles of the religion of Jesus, and of its transcending power on the conscience and the heart. He of course failed essentially as to the spirit and mode of presenting the truth to his dying fellow-men; and for about twelve years his sermons were no better than moral essays, and produced no more salutary effect; for not a single instance of the conversion of a soul to God is known to have occurred during that period of his ministry. But when a change was effected in his heart through divine influence, and a corresponding change produced in his religious principles, a similar change, as it regards the results of evangelical preaching, was immediately visible.

The same, in substance, is true of the celebrated Commentator, Dr. Scott, whose mind, in the early part of his ministry, was

perplexed with the doubts, and clouded with the darkness of Arminian and Socinian error. But when it pleased God to remove his prejudices and blindness, and to reveal in him his love, he became an able advocate of "the faith once delivered to the Saints," and a successful preacher of the gospel.

Now, let any one clothed with ministerial functions, cherish the belief, and let him avow his conviction of it, as a reality, that his hearers need no other change than what it is in the power of *moral suasion* to effect, and why should he look or ask for the presence and operations of the Holy Spirit? If the resources of an arm of flesh are deemed adequate to the emergency of the sinner's case, why should foreign succor be implored? And will any one, who discards the doctrine of special divine influence, should anxiety of soul be visible among his people, under any circumstances, direct them to *Him* with whom "is the residue of the Spirit." And will anxious souls, giving credence to his instructions, throw themselves as undone, wretched, and helpless at the foot of sovereign mercy and cry—"Lord, save us or we perish." If it be their decided impression, that they are in fact left to their own unaided resources; and that no other influence is requisite than that of *moral suasion*, can they be exhorted to do otherwise than "compass themselves about with sparks of their own kindling, and walk in the light of their own fire?" We may thus see why an ambassador of the cross is bound to declare "all the counsel of God." And why should any expect, that the seal of heaven's approbation should be imparted to any course that can be pursued? God is to be honored and glorified in ways divinely prescribed, in the full and lucid exhibition of the evangelical scheme of doctrines and duties revealed. And in no sense, is the grace of God frustrated by an undeviating adherence to such a course; nor is there in it any thing at war with moral agency and personal responsibility. Surveying the subject under the various aspects here presented, we may see the propriety and form of this language of an inspired apostle: "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truths' sake."

III. In the third place, the manner in which the gospel message should be announced.

The work devolving upon a duly accredited minister of Christ is inexpressibly solemn. He is stationed upon the walls of the spiritual Jerusalem, to watch for souls, as one who must give account. "Son of Man," said Jehovah to the prophet Ezekiel, "I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel;—therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity;—but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul." An outline has been exhibited of the message, which a minister of Christ is required to announce. The guilt and miseries of the fall, the wonders of redeeming love, as developed in the advent, sufferings and death of Christ, the preciousness of the gospel grace, the worth of immortal souls, the tremendous responsibility of the sacred office, the final meeting of ministers and their people, at the judgment seat of Christ, the joys of heaven, the hopeless wailings of the damned, are among the considerations, which show the amazing importance of ministerial fidelity. No wonder the great apostles of the Gentiles exclaimed, while surveying this monstrous subject—"Who is sufficient for these things!" How, then, must a minister of Christ announce his message, so as to be instrumental in saving both himself, and them that hear him.

1. He must do it clearly and fully.

It must be his object to give his hearers distinct views of all the doctrines and duties of religion. It is not the design of the ministry of reconciliation to make men philosophers, or critics, or logicians, but to make them wise unto salvation.

God has revealed in his word, no doctrine or duty but what should be clearly and fully exhibited by his ministers. They have no authority to conceal any part for fear of giving offence, or for the sake of increasing their popularity. They may not confer with flesh and blood, while this injunction of their Mas-

ter is sounding in their ears—"Preach the preaching that I bid thee." A full and lucid exhibition of all the counsel of God is indispensably necessary. He that would be understood, must make it his business to be understood, by speaking to the capacities of his hearers. "Truth," says Baxter, "loves the light, and is most beautiful when most naked. He is an enemy who hides the truth, and he a hypocrite, who does this under the pretence of revealing it. There is no better way to make a good cause prevail, than to make it as plain and as thoroughly understood as possible." How fully understood was Paul's address to the elders of Ephesus—and so of Peter's searching discourse delivered on the day of Pentecost.

2. In the management of the gospel message its several parts should be exhibited, as being connected and intimately blended.

There are, no doubt, some truths and doctrines more important in their nature and bearings than others. But "all Scripture," it is affirmed, "is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." O how precious is every portion of truth that has the stamp of divine authority upon it!—The holy Scriptures are full and complete. They comprise nothing that is superfluous, nor is there any deficiency. And the great truths and doctrines of christianity are intimately connected, and should be declared in their proper proportion. He who would faithfully declare all the counsel of God, must exhibit with prominence, fundamental principles. The connexion of one doctrine with another should be pointed out, together with the beauty and glory of the whole, and their known relative and essential bearings. In drawing a portraiture of the human frame, every member must be in its proper place, and the nicest care must be exercised in adjusting the proportions of the several parts, that there may be no defect in the transcript of that which "is fearfully and wonderfully made."

3. The minister of Christ should announce his message with affectionate tenderness.

"If much impressed himself as conscious of his awful charge, and anxious that the flock he feeds should feel it too," there will be reason to expect that the truth through the energy of the

"eternal Spirit," may reach the conscience and the heart. No part of the gospel message should be delivered with coldness and indifference.

"'Tis not a cause of small import,
The pastor's care demands ;
But what might fill an angel's heart,
It fill'd a Saviour's hands."

O how affectionate and tender should he be, who in Christ's stead, beseeches men to be reconciled to God. It was this spirit which nerved the arm and fired the soul of the great apostle in his laborious and perilous enterprises. And the same spirit prompted the apostolic Whitfield, to cross and re-cross many times the wide Atlantic, that he might preach the gospel as extensively as possible, and pour his whole soul into addresses delivered to his dying fellow-men. And O what melting tenderness and benignity marked the addresses and expostulations of *Him* who "spake as never man spake." And how should such a divine exemplar warm with tenderness and love the bosoms of every commissioned herald of the cross.

4. The gospel message should be delivered with supreme dependence on divine influence.

The disciples of our Lord were required, ere they embarked in the illustrious enterprise of evangelizing the nations, to tarry in the city of Jerusalem until indued with power from on high. And when such astonishing success crowned their prayers and efforts on the day of Pentecost, and subsequently as they went every where preaching the word, instead of arrogating the least honor to themselves, they ascribed the whole praise and glory of every spiritual achievement to the interposition of sovereign grace. In order to vindicate the claims of their Master, and to exalt him in the estimation of the assembled multitude, they affirmed, fearless of the enmity and rage of persecutors—"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which we now see and hear."

What multitudes was Paul the honored instrument of rescuing from the dominion of sin, and exposures to the horrors of per-

dition; and yet no preacher of the gospel was ever more humble, or more disposed to cast all the laurels won, through his instrumentality, at the feet of his divine master. While the strife and acrimony of misguided zealots rent asunder and marred the glory of a primitive church, one exclaiming, "I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos," the apostle utters this language of stern rebuke, enough, it would seem, to silence every caviller, and extinguish the fires of party animosity: "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers, by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man. I have planted, and Apollos watered, but God gave the increase—so then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase."

Probably no one ever labored in New England with more success as a preacher, or with more extensive and lasting utility as a writer, than the elder President Edwards. And let it be borne in mind, that it was a prime object with him in some of the most powerful appeals he made to the public—appeals which were heard, and felt, and regarded not only in this country but also in England and Scotland, and on the continent of Europe, and which have rendered his name immortal, to establish the doctrine of God's absolute supremacy, his sovereign and unlimited control, to explain the nature of moral agency and accountability, to strip this subject of false glosses thrown over it, by the sophistry of such as advocated the self-determining power of the will, to show that without the renovating work of the Holy Spirit, no one of the race of Adam will ever be fitted for the kingdom of heaven. Exclude the doctrine of special divine influence, and the lever that moves the moral world is gone, and the prospects of probationers for eternity are shrouded in the glooms of ~~second~~ death.

5. A spirit of prayer connected with, and springing from, ardent piety, should distinguish such as announce the gospel message.

As men are dependent on God for all success in spiritual conflicts and enterprises, how importunately should the requisite light and guidance be sought. Paul, as well as other primitive preachers, were evidently men of prayer, and they

deeply realized their need of an interest in the prayers of others. "Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified." Let divine illumination be implored in the prosecution of the work of the ministry; let a discourse ere delivered be consecrated to God in prayer, to be watered with the tears of a humble child-like spirit, in the closet, and who can doubt but that the divine presence would be secured in its delivery. Would not the goings of God be oftener seen in the sanctuary than they are, if every one about to officiate, had a heart to say as did Moses, in most trying circumstances—"If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence."

A minister's standard of personal piety should be elevated. A leader of "the sacramental host of God's elect," should, like Moses, be familiar with intimate communion with God. It should be apparent from his performances, that "he is a workman who needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." The more extensive the stores of his knowledge, when sanctified to the holy purposes of the ministry, in the same proportion may his usefulness be enhanced through the blessing of God. Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. And Paul received a finished education at the feet of Gamaliel. When, to these literary and scientific attainments were superadded spiritual acquisitions, rarely, if ever, equalled, they were qualified to exert an influence which should change extensively the aspect of things in the moral world. Every one inducted into the sacred office should possess respectable natural endowments. His mind should be thoroughly disciplined by study, and his heart be replenished by the grace of God, and he should be ready to make, with cheerfulness, an entire consecration of his all to the service of God, in the gospel of his Son. Paul testifies that it was "his heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel, that they might be saved."

Warm, expansive benevolence, should characterize all who sustain the responsibilities of the ministerial office and character. The faithful minister will not deem it enough that he enjoys the affectionate confidence of the people over whom the Holy Ghost hath made him an overseer—that they regularly attend

upon his ministrations, and that they are ready to discharge a thousand offices of kindness. But he dwells with intense solicitude upon what may be anticipated as the final result of his labors, as they regard both himself and them; and how ardent his desires and prayers, that the message he delivers, may prove a savor of life unto life to all who hear it.

And in order to accomplish an object so momentous, he labors by night and by day, at home and abroad, in season and out of season, feeding the sheep and the lambs of Christ's flock, in meekness, instructing those who oppose themselves, "if God peradventure will give them repentance, to the acknowledgment of the truth."

6. The minister of Christ should so announce his message, as to be pure from the blood of all men.

Paul, in his closing interview with the elders of the church of Ephesus, shows in a cursory manner, what part he had acted, and from what grounds he was led to draw the animating conclusion, that he was pure from the blood of all men. He appeals to their own convictions of his fidelity, in the discharge of official duty—"Ye know from the first-day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations which befel me by the lying in wait of the Jews: and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you, publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

• We may see from this simple, unvarnished statement of facts in relation to his course of procedure, that he had indeed imitated the example of Him who went about doing good. He informs us in a subsequent part of the narrative, that "for the space of three years and six months, he ceased not to warn every one, night and day, with tears."

His social visiting was, no doubt, altogether different from what marks the intercourse of many, who, adopting the formalities sanctioned by existing customs, exclude from their conversation topics of a religious nature. He determined "to

boldly know nothing among his hearers, save Jesus Christ and him crucified."—Not that he was in any sense indifferent to the encroachments of error, or the insidious attacks of enemies. We learn from his Epistles, that it was his undeviating practice, never to give place to error by countenancing, or by conniving, at the propagation of false doctrine, "no, not for an hour." He loudly reprov'd the apostle Peter in the presence of the other apostles, when he discovered indications of dissimulation on his part. It must have been obvious to all with whom he was conversant, that it was his sole object to glorify his Lord and Master in the conversion and salvation of men, so far as his instrumentality could have an influence, either by a blameless deportment, or a faithful announcement of the gospel message—and particularly by such forcible appeals to the conscience, as the familiarities of visiting from house to house afforded facilities of making. It was from such considerations that he felt authorized to affirm, that he "was pure from the blood of all men;" and no one invested with the credentials of the sacred office, without pursuing substantially the same course, can find himself standing on the same elevated ground, and be cheered by prospects equally animating, as he looks forward and anticipates the period as near, when he must "give an account of his stewardship."

The following may be seen to result, as conclusions from the subject thus presented:

1. We may learn the duty of such as are favored with the ministry of reconciliation.

It is to hear and obey the gospel message. When that message is announced with fidelity, obligations transcendently momentous are imposed upon such as listen to it. They are bound by the authority of Zion's King, and from ~~the~~ consideration of all that is solemn in eternal realities, to submit with cordiality to the claims of heaven. If ministers of Christ are bound to declare the whole counsel of God, all that counsel should of course be received. It is as clearly the duty of people to hear, believe, and obey the gospel message, as it is for ministers to announce it. Most obvious are the reciprocal duties of ministers and their people. It is not left at the option of the former

to consult their own ease and popularity, and to humor the prejudices of ungodly men, by concealing or keeping back certain parts offensive to proud and unsanctified hearts; but it is imperiously enjoined upon them by the great Head of the church, to declare all the counsel of God. They must exhibit the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, whether people will hear or forbear, and must cordially leave the results to be controlled by infinite wisdom and love. And how preposterous the part which such act, as censure pastors for declaring all the counsel of God. If parts of the message are offensive to some, and they array themselves in opposition to the truth, the controversy on their part is in fact with the Author of revelation, and with him they should settle it, and not censure and condemn Christ's ambassadors for announcing with plainness all the counsel of God, and thus endeavoring to clear their skirts of the blood of souls.

2. Such public teachers of religion must be awfully guilty, as heed the dictates of a temporizing and worldly policy in their ministrations.

It is made their duty to declare the whole counsel of God, and to deal faithfully with all the souls committed to their care and pastoral supervision. And how obviously do those act in the face of the most explicit divine instructions and prohibitions, whose leading object it is to be wasted on the gales of popular applause—who inquire whether this or that truth or doctrine will accord with the taste, feelings, and predilections of their hearers—or whether its suppression will be more likely to secure their approbation. Paul affirms—"If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ;"—and he assures us, that as soon as he was commissioned to preach the gospel, he no longer conferred with flesh and blood. "Wo is unto me if I preach not the gospel." The ministers of Christ should never suffer themselves to be swayed for a moment by the dictates of a temporizing and worldly policy. It is not, however, meant that they are warranted to disregard the esteem and approbation of those among whom they labor. The apostle testifies—"I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." But it was never at the expense of truth that he

sought the approbation of any. And his character comprised just such an assemblage of the lovely christian, and ministerial graces, as should distinguish all who "watch for souls, as they that must give account."

3. How interesting and solemn the connexion consummated between a minister and his people, at his ordination.

"By prayer, and the laying on of the hands of the presbytery," he is set apart to a work arduous in its nature, and connected with the most fearful responsibilities that can devolve upon a mortal, as he is to be a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death, to all committed to his pastoral care. After the lapse of a few years at most, the pastor and his flock must meet at the judgment seat of Christ. And there, all that has occurred under his ministry must pass in solemn review. Who can describe, or form any adequate conception of the awful realities of the scene? What rapture will fill the soul of him who had been a devoted and faithful pastor, when accosted in language of melting tenderness and benignity, by the Judge—"Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." And with what emotions of transport will the pastor, and such of his flock as he was instrumental in raising to the rank of sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, meet together in heavenly mansions, to celebrate the praises of Him "who loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood." Such as have been wise will then "shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that have turned many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever."

Standing as I now do in this consecrated place, and connected as I am with the pastor elect, I cannot deny myself the pleasure of addressing a few remarks to him, as well as to the people who are about to constitute his pastoral charge. And in doing this, I shall studiously avoid anticipating what may, with more propriety, be addressed to him and them, by respected brethren in the ministry designated for that purpose.

My dear son:—The time has arrived, when you are to be clothed with the authority, and invested with the functions of a minister of Christ—when you are to receive a charge in view

of the responsibilities of which an angel of light might tremble—when the object of your hopes, and prayers, and tears, and preparatory studies are about to be realized; yes, and when prayers, offered in your behalf, in your infancy, are about to be answered.

I can myself, never forget the scene, when your own dear mother, a few weeks after your birth, and but a few days before her death, admonished by symptoms too obvious to be mistaken, that the hour of her dissolution was rapidly approaching, desired that her infant son might be dedicated to God in baptism. You was then laid upon her arm, as she reclined upon her dying pillow, and was sprinkled with the baptismal water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. She then gave you the maternal benediction from a full heart of a dying mother's love—and prayed most affectionately and fervently, that your life might be preserved, that you might be educated, and be renewed and sanctified by the Spirit of God, and become a devoted minister of Christ—and closed in melting expressions of affection, and in the audible utterance of this prayer, for your spiritual and eternal welfare—"May the Father own him, the Son redeem him, and the Holy Ghost sanctify him." And to that prayer, I now respond my cordial amen, in the presence of this congregation. The Lord grant you, my dear son, grace and strength to be faithful to your own soul, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost is about to make you an overseer. So live and preach, so discharge every appropriate duty of a gospel minister, till called at death to lay down yourself and your commission at Christ's feet, as to be able then to say—"I am pure from the blood of all men—for I have not shunned to declare all the counsel of God: And the Lord give you many souls as the seal of your ministry, and the crown of your rejoicing, in that day when he makes up his jewels."

A word, in conclusion, to this church and congregation.

Dear friends and brethren—It is a subject that calls forth the congratulations of this auditory, that after the care and toil you have bestowed, the solicitude you have felt, and the expense you have incurred, in the erection and completion of this neat and commodious edifice, and after its solemn dedication to the ser-

vice and worship of the Triune Jehovah, you are about to receive an ascension gift. O how interesting to you, and your children, this period in the annals of this church.

If all the counsel of God is here declared unto you by your pastor, and with the prayerful solicitude and fidelity required, let there be on your part a faithful and conscientious discharge of every personal and relative duty. Realize your deep responsibility to Him who will shortly summon you all to a reckoning. Ever show yourselves the patrons of all that is lovely and of good report. Encourage your pastor to deal plainly and faithfully with you in the sanctuary; in social intercourse, as he warns you publicly and from house to house, as he enters the chamber of sickness to instruct and pray with the dying. And as he engages in the discharge of this whole routine of ministerial duty—and as one, and another, and another of you close your eyes in death, may it be while uttering the language of the dying martyr, Stephen—"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And may the affectionate and faithful announcement of the gospel message prove to you all, old and young, "a savor of life unto life." May you so improve the allotted season of your probation with its countless blessings, and consequent responsibilities, as, through grace to be accepted and rewarded on the great day of retribution. "And may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever: Amen."

S E R M O N,

P R E A C H E D A T T H E F U N E R A L

OF THE

R E V. C H A R L E S P R E N T I C E,

Late Pastor of the Church in South Canaan,

MAY 31, 1838.

B Y J A M E S B E A C H,

Pastor of the Congregational Church in Winsted.

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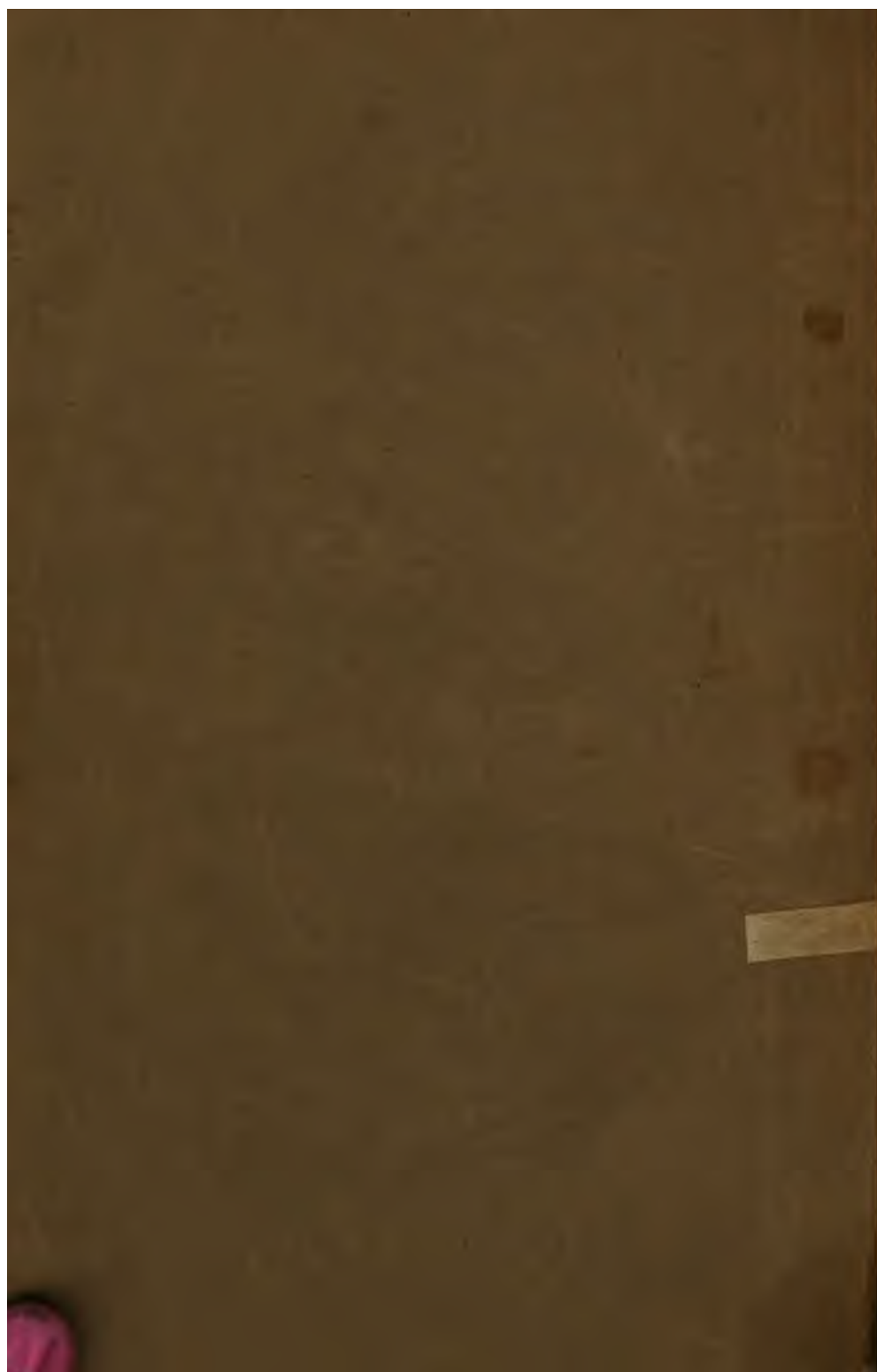
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1838.



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BEFORE HIS DECEASE, TO BE READ AT HIS
F U N E R A L .

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S E R M O N .

*At the Anniversary of the
Charles Burial in the City of New York*

ACTS viii. 2. — And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

WHILE Stephen was called to bestow some necessary attention on secular things for the relief of the apostles, he prosecuted with uncommon energy and zeal, the ministry of the gospel. He did great wonders and miracles among the people, and such was the wisdom and spirit with which he spake, that his enemies were unable to resist him. Having opportunity when falsely accused, to speak before his judges, he improved it, not so much to vindicate himself, as to bear witness to the truth. He was suffered to continue his testimony, until his enemies being cut to the heart by its directness and pungency, gnashed upon him with their teeth, stopped their ears, ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city and stoned him. Stephen died as such a witness to the truth might hope to die. Amidst the tumult and violence of his enemies he was full of the Holy Ghost. Celestial prospects opened on his view. He saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand, to whom, sinking under a shower of stones, he could commend his spirit.

On the departure of those who had been engaged in this tragedy, the friends of the martyred Stephen, *devout men*, carried his mangled remains to their burial, and made great lamentation over him. They lamented him *openly*, and gave him an honorable burial, notwithstanding the daring violence of the times.

These devout men regarded *the death of a faithful minister of the Gospel as a deeply afflictive event*. There may be those who are enemies to the ministers of Christ because they tell them the truth — who revile them, living, and secretly rejoice over them, dead. Others may regard their removal with indifference, having taken no interest in their persons, in the objects of their mission, in the Sabbath, the house of God, or in any of the institutions of religion. But with *devout persons* — those whose judgment and sensibility in

such cases are worthy of respect, it is otherwise. The perils which encompassed the friends of Stephen did not deter them from rescuing his remains from the contemptuous, brutal treatment to which they were left exposed, giving them an honorable burial and lamenting him openly.

I now stand in the midst of those whose feelings respond to the sentiment before us. God gave to this bereaved church and people a faithful minister. He was sent to them in his youth. At the call of Christ he cheerfully took the oversight of them, and devoted himself to be their servant for Jesus' sake. He never became indifferent to their welfare or weary of laboring for their spiritual good. Under his ministry God granted repeated seasons of refreshing and raised many to the hope of eternal life. The church has been preserved and enlarged, and all the spiritual interests of this people have been prospered. At length this man of God is arrested in the midst of his labors. Through months of pain and near converse with death, he sets his seal to that gospel which he had preached, from youth to age, and, at length, dies in the midst of his flock. The sensibility apparent, and the honorable testimonials which are not withheld, shew that the death of a faithful minister is regarded by you as a deeply afflictive event.

It is to be regarded in this light, —

I. In view of the *ends* which are accomplished by the ministry.

Under the preaching of the gospel attention is excited, religious knowledge is acquired, divine truth is considered, a respect for the Sabbath and the institutions of religion is increased, vice is shunned, virtuous habits are assumed, a concern for the future is awakened and the inquiry is made, *What must I do to be saved?* The Holy Ghost attends the divinely instituted means of grace. Men are born from above, animated with the hope of Heaven, prepared faithfully to serve God and their generation, and after having served in hope through life, depart in peace to be forever with the Lord. These effects are known only where the ministry of the gospel is enjoyed, and but for this ministry they would not be known.

This place, under the ministry of our dear brother, bore witness that God accomplishes these ends by the labors of his servants. Here he preached that gospel, with the dispensation of which, Christ has charged his ministers. He preached it from sabbath to sabbath — from house to house — in season and out of season — with weari-

ness and painfulness—in watchings often—with fasting and prayer—in the sanctuary, in the school and in the family circle, in the chamber of sickness, by the bed of the dying, and over the opened grave. He preached the gospel by word. He preached the gospel by his example. And, need I add, the great ends for which the ministry was instituted, have not failed. Here is a church of Christ. Its numbers with but few exceptions, have been gathered by our brother from the world. How many have inquired of him for the way of salvation! How many has he guided to the Saviour! You have not many *fathers*. The recollection of the favored seasons which you have enjoyed in the sanctuary stands connected with him. The recollection of what you have enjoyed at the table of Christ, brings up the remembrance of him. He has assuaged your griefs. He has strengthened your faith. This sacramental host has followed him in what you have enterprised for the glory of God and the salvation of men. But—all is over. His work is done. His last sermon is preached. His last example has been witnessed. Urgent soever as may be your necessities, he can respond to them no more. The children will cluster around him no more. The places of instruction he will visit no more. Your dwellings will rejoice in his presence no more. He will stand as the guide of inquirers no more. He will break the sacramental bread no more. He will apply the baptismal water no more. No more will he sympathise in your joys or sorrows, bear you on his heart, or intercede in your behalf before the throne of grace. All is done! O when we consider how benign is the influence of a faithful minister, his removal by death cannot be regarded otherwise than as a deeply afflictive event.

II. The death of a faithful minister is to be regarded in this light, in view of the *ties of friendship which it dissolves*. The relation between him and his people is such as can hardly fail of being cemented by friendship, tender and strong. Such a minister can say, on his part, *Ye are in our hearts to die and live with you*; and, there are times, at least, in which, if it were possible, his people would pluck out their eyes for him.

The *object of his labors* tends to render their union affectionate. He partakes of the feelings of Christ when he says:—*The thief cometh not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy; I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundant.*

ly. *I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep.* Paul assures his brethren that he sought not theirs but them — not their goods, but their salvation. He speaks of himself as travailing in birth for their spiritual good; — as ready to be offered on the sacrifice and service of their faith. *Being affectionately desirous of you,* he says to the Thessalonians, *we were willing to have imparted to you not the gospel of God only, but our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.* Where such feelings exist, and no faithful minister is a stranger to them, they will be *apparent*. Infallible proofs of them will appear. And where they are evidenced by such solicitude and labors as are their appropriate fruit, they can hardly fail to beget corresponding feelings.

The *intimacy* which takes place between a faithful minister and his people, in the prosecution of his work, is such as to render their union affectionate. He approaches them on subjects of the highest personal concern, and they make him the confidant of their secret feelings. They submit to him their views of divine truth, their hopes and fears, the questions of duty also that perplex them, and find that they meet with appropriate fidelity, and avail themselves of needed wisdom and kindness. Such intercourse must beget affection, affection that is rarely surpassed in any of the relations of men.

The *circumstances* under which a faithful minister is intimate with his people tend to beget a strong and mutual affection. He is with them on the best of days. On the day on which they are freed from the toils of life, the day which is an emblem of Heaven, and affords an earnest of Heaven they meet their minister. The anticipation of the Sabbath brings him before the mind. He is associated in their recollection with its joys and the blessings it has imparted, and is identified with all the lessons of public instruction which are remembered.

He is with them in *sickness*. The knowledge of distress is the only call for which he waits. He is present to enter into the causes of distress, to devise measures for relief, to sooth the sufferer, to point to the realities of that blessed world which sickness cannot invade, and in prayer, to bring the mind before God in the exercise of submission, hope, and trust.

He is with his people in seasons of *bereavment*. When parents weep because their children are not; when children are made or-

phans; when husbands and wives, in the bitterness of their souls complain; *lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness*, they want their minister, and he wants to be with them. In all their afflictions he is afflicted; his soul labors after such views of the gospel as are suited to their case, and with all the interest which a fellow feeling can impart, he carries them to a throne of grace.

He is with them, also, in seasons of *rejoicing*. They desire, through him, to give thanks. In connexion with the most joyous eras in all the families of his flock, is he remembered. The blessings which flow from the most interesting relations of life recall the affectionate remembrance of him.

In the most confident intercourse of *friendship* the faithful minister is with his people. They mutually desire to associate as *friends*, as well as in the relation they sustain to each other—to reciprocate kind offices and mingle their social feelings. All these circumstances go to render very strong the ties of friendship which unite minister and people.

I add that the *things of which a faithful minister is instrumental* have the same tendency. Who can we love, if not our spiritual benefactors—those who have borne with our waywardness—who could encounter, it may be, opposition and reproach from us in the prosecution of measures for our benefit—who could patiently labor to enlighten our dark minds—who could pray for us when we had no heart to pray for ourselves, and to whom we are indebted, under God, for being plucked as brands from the burning? Who can we love, if not those who have opened to us sources of light and comfort in affliction, who have explained to us the principles of the divine government, who have been the means of revealing to us the Son of man in the furnace, and of causing afflictions to work for us the peaceable fruits of righteousness, weaning us from the world, strengthening our attachment to things above, imparting to us clearer evidence, and raising us to nearer intercourse with our Heavenly Father? Who can we love if not those who have instructed us in the way of truth, who have reproofed our wandering, whose sympathies have diminished our sorrows and added to our joys?

O my hearers, in view of the ties of friendship dissolved by the death of a faithful minister, the event is to be regarded as deeply afflictive—ties rendered strong by the object of his labors, by the in-

tinacy which takes place in the prosecution of them, by the circumstances under which he is intimate with his people, and by the great good of which he is instrumental to them.

III. The death of a faithful minister of the gospel is afflictive as being, under some circumstances, a *dark and ominous dispensation of Providence*. Christ sending to a people such a minister is a token for good — a token that the blessings he imparts by the ministry are designed for them. O how much had the Lord Jesus Christ in view in favor of this people in raising up brother *Prentice* to be their minister. How would the friends of God and man, both in Heaven and on Earth, have rejoiced, could they have foreseen what has been accomplished by his ministry. The preaching of the gospel here for more than thirty-four years, with that indefinite variety of pastoral duties which has been connected with it, the stability and preservation of this church and society in seasons of deep depression, the hopeful conversion to Christ of hundreds, the joy of saints and angels over them, their being rendered meet for Heaven, Christ's being glorified in them, and their rejoicing and serving forever before the throne above, were involved in God's counsel for sending his servant over whom we now mourn, to labor in this part of his vineyard. From year to year the fruits of his ministry increased. Had the Great Head of the church seen fit to prolong it, these fruits had doubtless still increased. How dark and ominous then is his removal — his removal, not after the energies of body or mind had failed, and his capacity to feel and act for you had ceased, but at a period of life in which all his faculties were mature, yet undecayed.

Has no one of this people reason to inquire whether he have not provoked the Lord by not receiving his servant in a manner suited to his character and work? by not appreciating the privileges enjoyed under his ministry? — by not attending on them? — or by closing his eyes, by stopping his ears, by hardening his heart and refusing to obey the gospel?

Has this church no reason to suppose that the Lord Jesus Christ has somewhat against them, and that the removal of his servant is a rebuke addressed to them in his displeasure? Had they left their first love? Had they ceased to co-operate with their pastor, and to hold up his hands? Were they fruitful according to the faithful culture bestowed on them, and the instructive example which has shone before them?

The institution of the gospel ministry is the *bow of promise* to this revolted world. Christ's sending his ambassadors encourages the hope that he will reclaim sinners to obedience. Yea it affords assurance that he will do it. What then is their recall, but a measure that wears a contrary aspect? The recall of ambassadors is the breaking off of negociation, and the leaving of existing controversies unadjusted. So God's recall of his ministers gives reason, at least to fear, that he has closed his gracious negociation with those that have resisted his calls. *I have called, and ye have refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought my counsels and would none of my reproof; is the language of accusation which seems to be addressed, by the death of a faithful minister, to those that have persevered in impenitence. And what must be expected to follow? Therefore, I will wait still longer to be gracious? Or, I will laugh at your calamity?*

The day in which your minister was received was a season of mutual congratulation. That was a day of gladness to those who saw it. In view of the bereavments experienced by other churches, the distinction in your favor has been a subject of grateful notice. But what a reverse does this day present! Who that reflects on his own unanswered responsibilities, on the account which awaits him, and on the uncertainties of the future, must not regard it as a day of deep affliction?

IV. *The character of brother Prentice* enhances, in your case, these grounds for lamentation. His intellectual endowments, well cultivated, gave him an honorable standing with his brethren. His mind was enriched with various knowledge, but *theology* was his favorite study. In this his attainments gave him a prominent place in our councils. His theology was, evidently, what the Spirit as well as the Word, had taught him — what he had *seen* and *felt* as well as read. In his views of religion he harmonized with the fathers of this association. Not only did his sentiments indicate that he had sat at the feet of these fathers, but also the excellent spirit which he possessed. He was with them as a son with a father, and seemed to have caught their falling mantle.

His *piety* was clear. Regard for his people, for the churches around, the cause of benevolence, and the cause of Christ in the world, the manner in which he conversed, in which he prayed and preached, the manner in which he lived, enjoyed prosperity, suffered

affliction, endured sickness, confinement, and pain, the feelings with which he could take the retrospect of life, and look forward to the future, evinced exalted piety. The manner in which his Heavenly Father manifested himself to him is such as the world does not know. But here I cannot be particular. Many of you doubtless know more than I have had opportunity to learn, of his very peculiar exercises, and of the supports vouchsafed to him through his long and painful confinement. But months have passed away since I was permitted to hear from his own lips, that former clouds had disappeared; that ceasing to have any will of his own he had done with anxiety, and that he rested with assured hope that when his departure should take place, the time and circumstances of which it was his privilege to leave, it would be to be with Christ; and that through the successive hours of the day, and watches of the night, he could sweetly meditate on the things of Christ.

The ministry was his single object. But why should I dwell on these topics. You are his epistle, written on the heart. He went in and out before you, and his name will be precious with you. Your children and your children's children will repeat it, and it will go down with the history of this church to the second coming of his Lord. The ministry was his single object. In what enterprises than those which belong to this great work, or that are connected with it as subsidiary, as was Paul's laboring with his hands, have you known him to engage? What have his intellectual endowments and his assiduous labors availed him, but food and raiment for his household? What has he left for his family but the reputation of a faithful minister of the Lord Jesus Christ? Permit me to say that would you hope for the continued favor of the Lord Jesus Christ, you must remember them for his sake. The labors of his life were for *you*, rather than for them. And, I say, not for *his sake* only. I must speak in behalf of *her* who was his helper, who animated and encouraged him in his great work, whose discreet and intelligent counsels daily profited him, in whom he safely trusted, and without whom, he could not have been to you what he was. Behold the bosom friend—the helper of your minister. Behold this first of the mothers in your Israel.

In the ministry our brother was laborious, self-denying, affectionate — *O my affectionate brother*, very precious wert thou to me. In the youthful period of life we put on the harness together. In our



private intercourse, and in the meetings of brethren, our hearts, as our hands, have been *joined*. By thy examples have I been instructed, animated, reproved. Hast thou left me, *my only elder brother* in the endeared circle of Christ's ministers to which we belonged? O that during the little time in which this advanced position is to be occupied by me, I might copy thy fidelity to Christ and to souls; — that I might know more of that blessed assurance which gave thee steadfastness through months of pain, and amid the swellings of Jordan; and that I might experience more of those communications from above, which, to thy sinking soul, were more than peace, which were Heaven begun in this house of clay.

While brethren and friends, you have such occasion to be afflicted, let me remind you that the *Chief Shepherd* lives. He will not forsake you in your destitute state. Cherish union. Be now doubly careful that no root of bitterness spring up to trouble you. Now let it be seen that every one is ready to stand in his place, to put forth his hand to the work that must be done, and to apply his shoulders to the burdens that must be borne. Seek the privileges of the ministry again; seek them without delay; seek them from Christ. And may he whose gift was the minister you bury to day, remember you with another gift, and send him for the purpose of saving you and your children.

My dear *sister* and *bereaved children*, there are considerations in your case which should be effectual to *console*. *The Lord hath done it*. It is therefore wisely done, and done in covenant faithfulness. It is to be added that you sorrow not as those who have no hope. To the same Saviour whom the dying Stephen saw, your friend and father could commit his departing spirit.

Considerations that are effectual also to *support*, are not wanting in your case. *A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows is God in his holy habitation*. I may add the assurance that the ministers of Christ whom you have been accustomed to receive, and your other christian friends, will not forget that an essential part of pure and undefiled religion is to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction.

Considerations further, there are, that should render you *thankful* — thankful even *now*. How good was God in giving you such a husband, and in making your father what he was to you! How

good in continuing him so long! How good in giving you such assurance that it was gain for him to die!

Be ye followers of him as he was of Christ, and your separation will be only temporary. Faith sees him united again to his beloved *Martha*.^{*} And faith, if you be found meet, anticipates the union of you all a *happy family in Heaven*.

Brethren in the ministry. The time is short, and of uncertain, as well as brief, continuance. O what lessons have we on this subject in the mortality of our brethren! Bereavement has followed bereavement in this neighborhood of churches, not in the removal of fathers only, but of brethren in the midst of life.[†] These lessons are addressed to *ministers*, and they not only teach, but loudly admonish us to do, with our might what our hands find to do. We must not say, would God we had died with our brother; we must not continue together in the sympathy of grief, to weep over his grave, but return, each to the field assigned him, and labor, according to the measure of our strength, and continue, till the MASTER come.

^{*} A youthful daughter who died about two years since in joyful hope.

[†] The removal of *Cowles, Perry, Talcott*, and *Andrews*, from contiguous parishes in the western district of the association, is recent.

A D D R E S S .

CANAAN, February 25th, 1838.

If the Preacher deems it expedient, he is at liberty to read at my funeral, the following, and last communication from me to my dear people.

Providential indications, which (I think) cannot be mistaken, lead me to the conclusion that "the time of my departure is at hand." I feel a most earnest desire, that my death may be sanctified to the spiritual good, not only of my dear wife, and children, but also to all among whom I have long labored, for God in the gospel of his Son. The desire alluded to has been much increased, of late, while meditating upon these words of Peter, in his second Epistle first chapter and fifteenth verse: "I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance."

I sincerely hope and pray that the dying thoughts of one, who has spent about thirty-four years among you in efforts to promote your spiritual well-being, may have a salutary influence upon all classes in this community.

My dear friends and fellow travellers to the eternal world, —

You hear this read by another voice than that of your late Pastor, and when the hand that penned the communication, is cold in death, O remember that "being dead he yet speaketh," and receive what follows, as from one who has gone to "give up an account of his stewardship."

I had a strong desire, at times, during my protracted illness, to recover, so far as to be able once more to preach from the sacred desk I had long occupied, and proclaim the wonders of redeeming love; to urge upon saints and sinners, their imperative and binding obligations, and to tell my dear people what God hath done for my own soul. I wished to tell them that I was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; that it is emphatically the wisdom of God, and

the power of God to all who believe, that it is exactly suited to the wants and circumstances, of such fallen, hell-deserving creatures, as we all are; and that I have felt to my dying day, that a more noble employment could not be assigned to mortals, than that of spending and being spent, in prayer and efforts to extend the soul-cheering influence of the glorious gospel of the blessed God. I have had ample opportunity to review my life, as a professed christian and Minister; and while I find much to deplore; numerous deficiencies and imperfections to acknowledge and mourn over, I feel able and bound to bear decided testimony to the truth and immeasurable importance of the evangelical scheme, or system of doctrines, and duties, which it has been my object to inculcate, defend, and enforce, throughout the whole course of my ministry. I think I have not shunned to declare all the counsel of God; and I trust, through infinite mercy to be acquitted; and that it will ultimately appear, that I am pure from the blood of all. The great system of doctrines and duties alluded to, are fully recognized in the articles of faith adopted by this Church. In my weak and declining state, they have been as food to my soul. They are the foundation of a glorious spiritual edifice, and I would not on any consideration, abandon any one of the doctrines of grace, however offensive to the carnal mind. Native depravity; the sovereign, electing love of God, according to stipulations in the covenant of redemption; the direct influences of the Holy Spirit, by which alone the heart is renewed; the divinity and vicarious sacrifice of Christ; the final perseverance of all true believers; the eternal blessedness of saints, and the endless misery of the wicked, are, in my view among the cardinal and fundamental doctrines of the Bible. I am about to leave the world, in the full and cordial belief of these, and of all connected.

It is my fervent prayer to Almighty God, that all who listen to this address from their late Pastor, may in the choice of his successor fix upon one, who is sound in the faith; evangelical in all his views; a man of ardent piety: who loves and is devoted to the work of the ministry.

Support by your prayers, and with a liberal hand, such as may be sent by the Great Head of the church and labor to promote the spiritual well-being of yourselves and your dying children. Be united;

love one another with a pure heart-fervently. "Strive together for the faith of the gospel."

I trust that numbers present, through rich and boundless mercy, may prove my crown of rejoicing in the great day. In seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, how has my heart rejoiced over new born souls; and how pleasant have been many seasons around the Sacramental Table, when numbers united with the visible flock of Christ, to celebrate the wonders of *His* dying love. I think I have long loved the renewing, unerring, and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. It is owing solely to his influences, that any success has crowned my ministrations.

You may wish to know what were the views, feelings, and prospects of your late Pastor, during his lingering, and fatal malady, and as death appeared near and inevitable. And in what is now to be disclosed, he thinks he feels no other wish than to exalt God and honor him, for his rich and boundless grace to one of the chief of sinners.

It has been an important object of his ministry to impress upon the dear friends of Jesus, the fact that God is a faithful and covenant keeping God; that where he begins a good work, by His Spirit, he will perform it, until the day of Jesus Christ; that he will cause the path of the just to be as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Your Pastor enjoyed almost uninterrupted serenity of mind; felt no agitations of surprise and terror when death seemed the nearest; he thought he found verified, in his own experience the divine declaration; "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." He thought he could adopt in sincerity of soul, the language of the Apostle; "I know, in whom I have believed and am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him, against that day." Sweet anticipations of Heavenly blessedness, have filled his soul to overflowing. O how enrapturing to think of the cloud of witnesses by which we are compassed about; not only of the departed worthies of past ages; but also of many who once lived in this vicinity: such as Mills and Hallock and Robbins and Starr and Crossman and Perry and Cowles and Andrews, and a host of others, whose praise is in the churches, and whose ransomed spirits are now rejoicing before the throne. O what will it be to be joined to such a society, to be

united to the general assembly, and church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven.

"O the delights, the heavenly joys;
The glories of the place;
Where Jesus sheds the brightest beams;
Of his o'er flowing grace."

The author of these dying thoughts, affectionately commends his family, to the prayers, sympathies, kindness, and liberality of his late dear people. He acknowledges with gratitude, numerous expressions of christian courtesy and benevolence. His dependent surviving family will need more than ever an interest in your kind, benevolent regards.

"Pity the weeping Widow's woes
And be her counselor and stay;
Adopt the fatherless, and smooth
To useful, happy life, their way."

O how pleasant and desirable that Pastor and people who in this world, often mingle in scenes of the most tender and thrilling interest, be prepared to meet together in heavenly mansions. How many houses of sorrow and mourning has the author of this address visited. There are very few houses in this place, where he has not preached to the bereaved, while weeping over the cold remains of departed relatives. O how many who once occupied seats in sanctuary, are now rejoicing in the presence of God and the Lamb. And what numbers is there reason to fear have gone down "to the hopeless world of woe."

He who lately sustained the relation of your spiritual teacher, felt and long felt deep solicitude for the welfare of the rising generation. He rejoiced in the recent and successful efforts made, to revive sacred music. He was aware that several of his own children, were among the choir of singers. And though he had not the happiness, to hear the new choir sing the songs of Zion, yet it was his heart's desire and prayer to God, that he *might* hear them all sing "the new song;" (a song which none but the renewed and sanctified in Christ Jesus can ever sing) in the paradise of God. And O ye young immortals, disappoint not the fond hopes of your late Pastor. "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth,"

and soon you will unite with multitudes which no man can number, in singing, "Worthy is the Lamb, that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and honor, and glory, and blessing, for thou hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood." The dying author of this address, begs of those advanced in life, and who have been under his ministry throughout a whole generation to ask, as in the presence of the heart searching God, how have we profited, by our advantages, what are now our prospects and O shall we all meet together, at the right hand of the Redeemer. "The hoary head is a crown of glory when found in the way of righteousness."

He whose dying thoughts are now addressed to you, and through the medium of another, has long felt deep solicitude that all his dear people, may participate in the blessings of the great salvation. He feels the most friendly regards to all; and is not conscious of the existence of any ill will, towards any human being.

He requests the preacher to give his love to all his dear brethren in the ministry, who may attend his funeral; to all, old and young, who have constituted his late pastoral charge. He whose lifeless remains are now before you, was not afraid to die. He has gone but a little before survivors. There is but a step between the living and the dead. If departed spirits are acquainted with events on earth, — and he, who though now dead, yet speaketh, fully believed the fact, — how would he rejoice with holy angels, over repenting sinners, in this place. How would it heighten the bliss and rapture of Heaven, to learn that this and that one was born in Zion; that great numbers were born of the Spirit and were rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. Some of the precious seed sown by your late Pastor, may yet spring up and bear fruit abundantly. And how would he rejoice, as one and another, and another, of the dear friends of Jesus, are removed by death, to welcome them to the world of blessedness. O what a prospect would open, should he meet *all* the members of his dear family, in the world above, yea, all his former neighbors, all the members of this church, and all with whom he has been conversant, in this vicinity.

There is room in the mansions, which Jesus has gone to prepare for his followers, for all who come to Him, and embrace Him as their God and Saviour. All will be welcomed to the embraces of ever-

lasting love, who believe to the saving of the soul. And O how precious is Jesus, to all who thus believe.

If streams are so refreshing to pilgrims on earth what will be their fulness of joy, when admitted to the fountain head above; when the Lamb shall lead them to fountains of living water, and when God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

And now in conclusion, your late Pastor, through the medium of the living preacher, bids you all an affectionate farewell, till we meet at the judgment seat of Christ.

CHARLES PRENTICE.



BEACH, James
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